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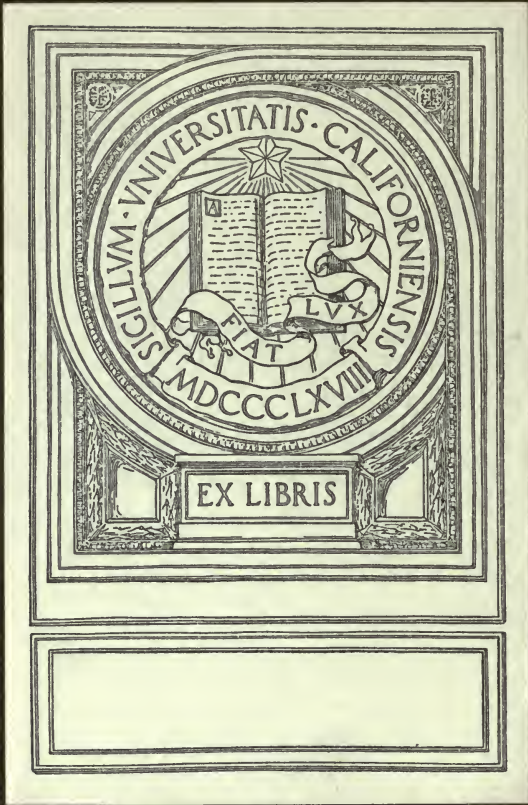
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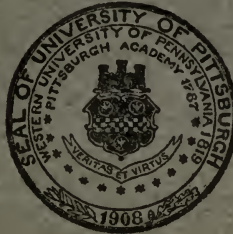
Number One

Aims and Methods OF High School Latin

BY

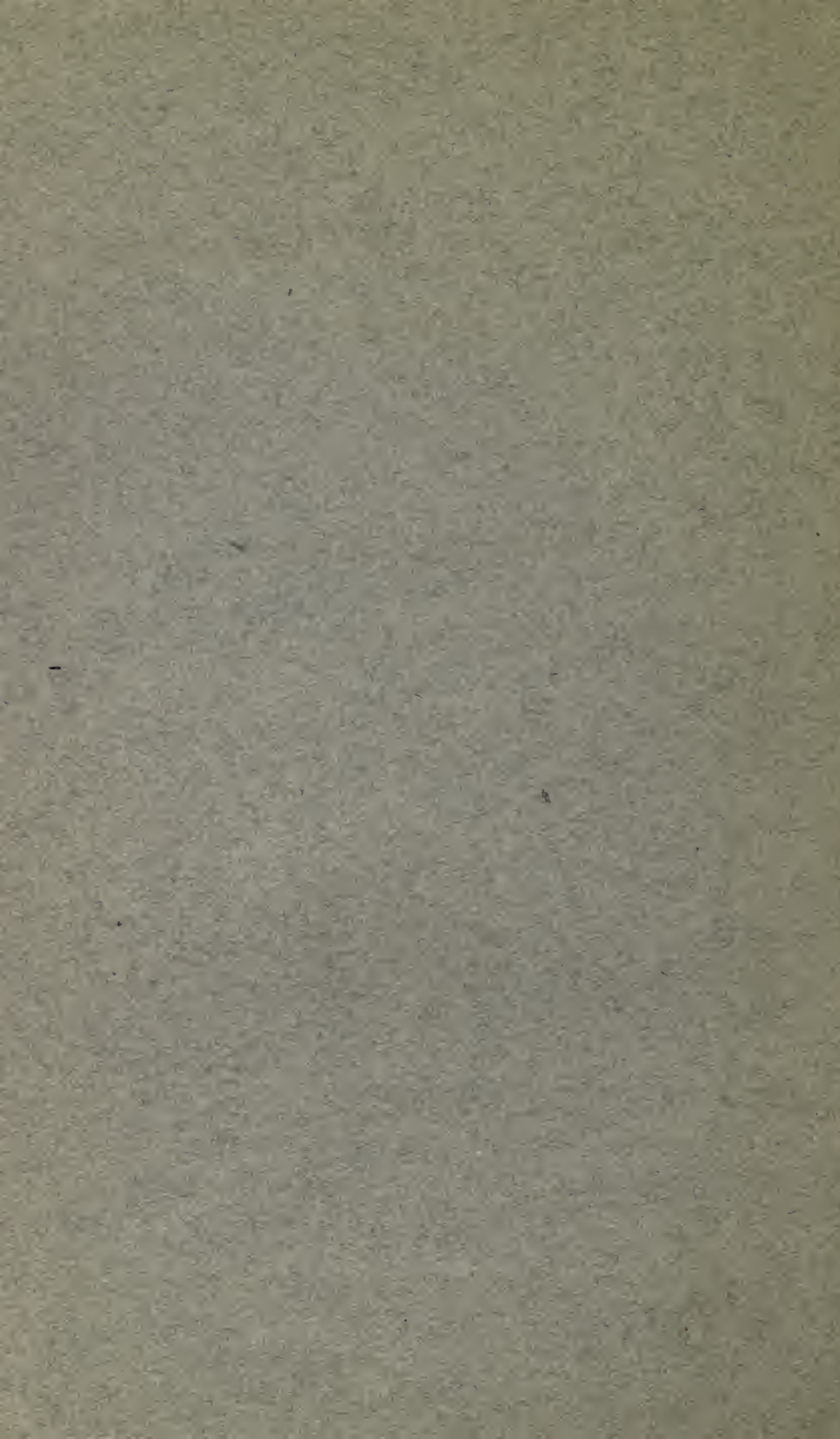
B. L. ULLMAN, Ph. D.

Professor of Latin



Published Semi-Monthly by the University of Pittsburgh

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The University of Pittsburgh believes that it is its function to be of the greatest possible service to the people of Western Pennsylvania. The department of Latin of the University desires to do its share towards the accomplishment of this aim. One of the plans of the department is to publish a series of bulletins that may be of value to the principals and Latin teachers of the high schools of Western Pennsylvania, especially those who can not avail themselves of the courses of instruction at this University or elsewhere. It is intended that these bulletins shall treat of methods of teaching, the course of study, points to be emphasized, making the subject interesting, etc. Bibliographical notes are to be included. The intention is to be suggestive and helpful rather than exhaustive and novel. Besides publishing these bulletins from time to time, the department of Latin is at all times ready to assist Latin teachers and others in any way it can in matters of teaching, encouraging the Classics, etc.—to be a clearing-house for all matters pertaining to Latin in this part of the state. Suggestions for this purpose and for the bulletin will be welcomed.

B. L. ULLMAN, Professor of Latin.

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AIMS AND METHODS OF HIGH SCHOOL LATIN

It is the purpose of this bulletin to suggest to teachers of Latin that it is highly desirable for them to ask themselves what their aims are in teaching Latin and how those aims affect or should affect their methods—for we can not discuss methods profitably until we have come to some conclusion about aims. This fundamental truth is not always remembered by those who talk about methods. To achieve the purpose indicated, it is proposed to present the various aims and to make brief comments on methods suggested by them, more detailed discussion being left to another time.

Entirely too many teachers will say that they have no aims, that, though they know little about the subject and have no interest in it, they have been assigned classes in Latin against their wishes, or that they are teaching Latin because the positions which they are holding pay better than others, etc. In this state of affairs lies the responsibility, it seems to me, for much of the dissatisfaction with the American high school. It is asserted that none of the subjects is properly taught and that poorly equipped teachers have passed on their meagre knowledge to their successors. The fault is not that of the teacher but of the authorities or the community. I do not mean to say, of course, that a narrow specialist is needed in the high school, or that a person with a thorough knowledge of his subject is sure to be a good teacher. Unfortunately, the prominence given in recent years to teaching students in distinction from teaching Latin or any given subject has tended to give the impression that a knowledge of principles and methods of teaching, etc., is all-important and that a knowledge of the subject is of lesser importance. As a matter of fact, both are important—but an adequate knowledge of the subject must come first. Horse and cart are both necessary, but progress will be somewhat slow if you get them in the wrong order.

Let us return to our main point—the aim or aims of high school Latin. Some teachers say that their entire aim is to prepare students for college entrance examinations. Such a statement today betrays either ignorance or prejudice. For in the first place, many colleges now admit students on certificate (and this is particularly true of the colleges which the majority of Western Pennsylvania students attend), and, in the second place, even those colleges which require examination have, for the most part, so modified their examinations that teachers now have little reason to say that their sole aim is to prepare for these examinations. This change has been due to a report of a representative Committee of Fifteen which recommended that greater attention be given in the examinations to the ability to translate Latin at sight. A detailed discussion of

this important report must be left to another bulletin, as it involves the question of the high school course in Latin. It must not be overlooked that many colleges go much farther than the Committee's suggestions. It can not be said then that the high school Latin teachers of Western Pennsylvania are dominated by the colleges as far as aims and methods are concerned.

Some of us take the position that our aim is so obviously to teach the student to read Latin with understanding that any discussion of the matter is superfluous. In a way this is of course true, but the trouble is that it does not go deep enough. Why should our students be able to read Latin? Evidently we can not be satisfied with so general a guiding principle. When we come down to "brass tacks" we see that our aims must coincide with our conceptions of the educational values of Latin.

There are many who would say categorically that our only aim is to instil an appreciation of Latin literature. If this be so, then we can not expect many students to study Latin. The majority of students can not be expected to reach a stage of appreciation during the high school course that would justify the expenditure of one-fourth of their time, and we can not go on the supposition that they will go to college and continue Latin there. We must leave the college out of consideration and think of the high school course as an end-all and be-all in itself; for it must be understood that we are trying to justify the study of Latin by the thousands whose Latin course does not extend beyond the high school. Furthermore we must keep in mind the students who do not complete even the high school Latin course. If literary appreciation is to be the chief aim, we must be content to see a comparatively small number of Latin students in our schools. I do not of course mean that literary appreciation has no place at all in the high school Latin course—we shall see in a moment what that place is.

It seems rather that there should be several aims of Latin study—the more that we can accomplish by teaching Latin, the more suitable a subject it is for the high school. There is thus no reason to attack Latin because teachers can not agree on any one aim. The important aims may be grouped under four heads: 1) mental discipline, 2) help in English and all language study, 3) literary appreciation, 4) historical perspective. Teachers differ as to the relative importance of these. Taking the high school Latin course as a whole, the second seems to me the most important; in the early years the first is more important than the third or fourth; in the later years the reverse is true; finally the fourth seems more important than the third. The first two are far more easy of attainment and appeal to far more persons than the third. Let us discuss them in order.

I. MENTAL DISCIPLINE.

A few years ago many educators scoffed at the idea of getting "formal discipline", as it was called, from any subject; i. e., it was denied that any mental habit could be transferred from one field to another. The anti-discipline movement, like many others, was not altogether without basis of truth, and thus had a wholesome effect, but the consensus of opinion to-day is that there is such a thing as discipline (we now call it "mental" discipline) and that it is an extremely important function of the high school course.¹ But it is often asserted that other subjects give discipline besides Latin. This is true, but it seems to me that Latin is a better-balanced discipline than other subjects, and that this fact, together with its other advantages, makes it a highly efficient educational instrument. It has been said that "the science of language is the subject which of all the circle of the Sciences affords us the most satisfactory revelations about human thought and methods of apprehension."² And as for Latin, it has been said that "an inherent logic [is] the main characteristic of the Latin language and grammar."³ Let us try to analyze (difficult though it be) what we mean by discipline and see if our claims are justified, and at the same time consider what influence the aim to apply effectively the various forms of discipline should have on method.

The power of observation—correct observation—is necessarily cultivated more in Latin than in modern languages because of the greater number of forms. It is necessary for the student to recognize the forms in the sentence before he can translate it. Since this is fundamental, it is all-important for the student to learn the forms at the beginning of his course. Drill on forms is thus the chief work of the first year. This does not mean merely memorizing a list of them. The student must *know* the forms—he must associate meaning and function with each individual one in order to recognize them when he meets the form. One might

¹ Johnston, High School Education, p. 44: "Finally it should be kept constantly in mind that, in the considerations of this chapter, two vital questions are involved. One is that we must make our choice of studies and of selected materials in these studies with reference to the *disciplinary effects* inherent in them, as well as with reference to the immediate social use and advantage they possess. The other is that, after our curriculum subjects and the particular topics within these special fields have been settled upon, *we must refine our methods so as to make the best possible use of the subject-matter in the course.*"

² Quoted by Weise, Language and Character of the Roman People (English translation), p. 64.

³ Ibid. p. 55.

train a South Sea Islander unacquainted with English to recite from memory the soliloquy from "Hamlet". To an American listener the sounds would convey a meaning, to the speaker they would be merely a succession of sounds. In the case of most students who do poor work in Latin in their later years the trouble goes back to the first year, and much of the trouble of the first year is due to this sort of mechanical memorizing.

We need then intelligent drill in forms in the first year, but further than that we need accurate observation of forms in the following years. Insistence on this point is essential to real progress, and at the same time acts as a stimulus to correct observation and thus is invaluable for discipline.

After a given set of facts has been observed, the next step is to relate them to each other by the reasoning process. This is exactly what must be done in translating a Latin sentence—more so than in a modern language. As far as the process of reasoning is concerned reading English is like watching the spokes of a rapidly moving wheel—we get only the general effect; our reading of a modern foreign language is like watching the spokes when the wheel moves slowly; reading Latin gives one the opportunity of examining carefully the individual spokes of the motionless wheel. In order to learn Latin and in order to gain the full benefit of this discipline, it is important that the teacher constantly encourage correct reasoning. Let us illustrate the processes of observation and reasoning by a concrete example: *In hostis castris eram*. A careless student starts to translate thus: "In the enemy"—and stops. The teacher asks what the case of *hostis* is and by judicious questions and suggestions he gets at the correct answer. "If it is genitive, can it be the object of *in*?" asks the teacher. "No," is the answer. "Why?" "Because prepositions do not govern the genitive." "What must be the construction of *hostis* then?" "It must depend on *castris*," etc. This sort of thing must go on continually in the class-room during the earlier work. Gradually the pupils make fewer mistakes, the teacher takes more things for granted, and the details of the reasoning process are laid bare less often. It is the teacher's art to know both what he needs to ask and what not to ask. To give the student the greatest amount of discipline the teacher should force the student to think for himself. A lazy student often makes an unreasonable answer to a question on construction. The teacher must keep at him till he makes him think it out. The effect will be salutary to the individual and the class. It is discipline in a double sense.

Latin syntax should be taught, in some measure, at least, as a *reasonable* thing. The inductive method—impossible if carried to extremes—can be of some service here. In taking up certain new constructions, the

student may be taught to *observe* certain facts, and to *reason* out rules from them—all under the guidance of the teacher. And this suggests that nothing should be more welcomed by the Latin teacher than the supervised-study plan which is being introduced in some schools. Proper supervision (which does not mean doing the student's work for him) is bound to improve the work done. For one thing it will help in the matter of "ponies"—a disease which comes over some schools like a blight and leaves others untouched.

Altogether, then, this observation and reasoning, with the necessity for accuracy, concentration and hard work which it entails, furnishes in Latin a "splendid mental discipline", to use the words of one who is none too good a friend of Latin, President G. Stanley Hall.¹

II. AID IN ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE STUDY.

Let us consider the value of Latin for English, and its effect on aims and methods. First, there is the fundamental language value of Latin syntax. One often hears people say that they knew no English grammar until they studied Latin. French and German are just as dependent on Latin for this purpose and therefore can not serve as a substitute for Latin. The Latin teacher should keep this value of Latin in mind when teaching syntax—he should compare and contrast English and Latin syntax. Even more important is the matter of vocabulary. The English words that everybody knows from childhood are mostly of Anglo-Saxon origin; the words that we learn later are largely of Latin origin, directly or indirectly. The objection has been raised that the meanings of such words are usually not the same as they were in the Classical Latin authors which we read, but as they were in late Latin and the Romance languages; that, therefore, a Romance language like French should be studied instead of Classical Latin. This objection betrays utter misapprehension of the point. Why study any language but our own? Why go to the trouble of learning that the Latin form of 'conscience' is 'conscientia', or that the French form of 'scruple' is 'scrupule'? It is because the word has changed in meaning that it is essential to get at the original meaning, and this for two reasons: sometimes an English word derived from the Latin is used in several senses—the original and a derived meaning, and we must be able to see how the latter grew out of the former, and, secondly, a word is often used in a combination of senses picturing its whole history. Both of these things are due to the fact that most of the men who have molded our language have been thoroughly acquainted with Latin—Classical Latin.

¹ In a lecture at the University of Pittsburgh, July 9, 1913.

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The importance of Latin for English vocabulary should be recognized in the teaching. English derivatives should always be sought out by the student under the teacher's direction from the very beginning of Latin study. The teacher must get the pupil into the habit of associating the Latin word and the English derivatives. An interesting experiment for the teacher to try by himself and to illustrate before the class is to take a paragraph or page of Latin and to see how few of the words have no English derivatives. This emphasis on derivation has a practical result for the Latin itself. It is a great help in the acquisition of a Latin vocabulary. Getting a vocabulary is a matter of associations, and the most useful and natural associations are those of Latin word and English derivatives. While we are on this point, it may be said that getting the meaning of the new words in a Latin sentence should not be difficult—what with English derivatives, related Latin words and the context—the difficulty is in recognizing the form. To take the example given above, the student does not know whether *hostis* is dative or ablative plural of the first or second declension, or genitive singular of the third. The special vocabularies in our school editions are great evils, though necessary ones, apparently, under our present system. It might be a great help if they merely gave the information about the form of the word (e. g., *hostis*, noun, masc., gen. *hostis*) and omitted the English translation, leaving it to the notes to supply it when absolutely necessary. There is no question but that students are altogether too dependent on the vocabulary. A partial remedy, even with our present books, is to do a good deal of sight reading—in which the teacher should lead the student to find the meaning of the new words and not tell him outright.

Another thing to be stressed for the sake of the English is Latin word formation. Finally, teachers should be extremely careful about the English that the students use in translating. This is apt to be one of the weak points in the Latin work. I doubt if the student's English is harmed by slipshod translation in the Latin class-room, as some maintain, but it certainly is not improved, and thus one of our most important aims may in part be nullified. A striking testimonial to the value of Latin for English is given by Mr. A. S. Perkins of the Dorchester, Mass. High School in the *Classical Journal*, 8. 301. The teachers of the commercial department of the school asked that Latin be substituted for modern language in the first two years because their experience told them that the Latin students had a better knowledge of English, and good English was indispensable to the commercial graduate. The advantage of the Latin student consisted, they felt, "in giving a better idea of the meaning of words, and in imparting an observable facility in expressing oneself." Mr. Perkins rightly concluded that this value of Latin was so important that he ought to adapt his method of teaching to it. He in-

sisted on correct English in translating, demanding much written work for this purpose, and required considerable study of English words derived from Latin. Such emphasis should not be limited to a two-year course for commercial students, but should find a place in all high schools. One result will be to make it more profitable than it has been in some schools for students to take one or two years of Latin.

III. LITERARY APPRECIATION.

In discussing literary appreciation as an aim of high school Latin teaching we need to have clearly in mind what we mean by the term. Some have used it rather loosely to cover some of the points discussed above, as well as those included in our fourth aim. Assuming, however, that by literature we mean a form of art, it is clear that the literary appreciation to be acquired in the first two years is trifling. In dealing with Cicero, however, attention should be given to the chief features of his periodic style,—chiasmus, anaphora, etc. Indeed, a little conscious attention to these matters will make it far easier for the student to learn to read Cicero. Appreciation of Cicero is vital; he who likes Cicero likes Latin; he who knows Cicero knows Latin, more than that, he knows English style. No one has had greater influence, directly and indirectly, on English style than Cicero. Some of this influence can and should be pointed out—a notable example is Burke. But in the fourth year, with its poetry, still greater stress should be laid on the literary side. Scansion is, or should be, taught solely for the purpose of adding charm to the verse. Virgil, as Cicero, should be brought into relation with English literature. Virgil and Ovid furnish convenient starting points for the study of mythology—a knowledge of which is so important for the study of both English and Latin literature. But there is something more which can not be so definitely stated. It is enough to say that if the teacher himself appreciates the literature he will pass on some of his appreciation to his students.

IV. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Then there is a fourth aim which we should keep in mind—what we may roughly call the historical, and its value may be called a social one. We may say that it consists in comparing and contrasting ancient and modern civilization. The essential thing is to impress on the student the modernness of antiquity and the antiquity of modernness. A broad course in history, excellent as it is, can not give this impression. But a

comparison of Roman politics as described by Cicero and Sallust with modern politics is bound to have an effect. The present age seems to delight in the concrete, and this is especially true of the school-boy. To read about the remarkable life of Julius Caesar may not bring him very near to us, but if this reading is accompanied by that of some of the original words of this man it can not fail to be impressive. The teacher who does not connect the text of Caesar with Caesar the man is missing a great opportunity. As with literary appreciation, so with historical appreciation—the teacher himself must have it to impart to his students. The lives of Caesar and Cicero, the relation of Virgil to Augustus, certain phases of Roman life, private and public, social and political—the background needed for the reading of the texts—are the materials that the teacher should utilize in his method.

When we sum it all up, we find that, by making these our aims, we are using an excellent method of teaching the student to read Latin; by keeping in mind the first two aims, we teach him to read with understanding—knowing what the Latin *says* to us,—by keeping in mind the last two aims, we teach him to read with intelligence—knowing what the Latin *means* to us.

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In the above list reference is made to a number of articles in the Classical Weekly and the Classical Journal. Both of these are indispensable to the teacher on all matters pertaining to Latin. Residents of Pennsylvania can obtain the former (28 issues per year) only by becoming members of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States (\$2 per year; address Chas. Knapp, Barnard College, New York). Members may obtain back volumes (1-6) for \$1 each, and the Classical Journal (9 issues per year) at the reduced rate of \$1 per year (regular rate \$1.50). The School Review (University of Chicago Press) and the Educational Review (Columbia University) occasionally contain articles dealing with Latin.

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